

Josiah Humphrey House
118 Benefit Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-150

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
53-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-150

JOSIAH HUMPHREY HOUSE

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,

Address: 118 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.
Plat 10, Lot 100. In 1824 this lot was 64 Benefit Street, in 1847 it was 92 Benefit Street. Since 1866 it has been 118 Benefit Street.

Present Owner: Charles B. Davison.

Present Use: The house is presently being renovated for use as a dwelling by the present owner.

Brief Statement of Significance: Built in 1809. This is an example of the less common brick houses on College Hill, and the earliest one standing on this part of Benefit Street. It has been remodeled at various times, and preserves both original and later detail and ornament of interest.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1782:--John Carter, printer and Amey his wife et al for \$193 sell to John Updike the 2/3 part of an undivided lot of land on Benefit Street being part of the Estate of Colonel Jabez Bowen--Deed Book 20, page 642, in Providence City Hall.

1809:--John Crawford Updike sells the property to John Miller Noyes for \$400--Deed Book 32, page 285, in Providence City Hall.

1809:--John Miller Noyes, mariner, sells for \$500 to Josiah Humphrey, cabinet maker "a certain lot of land situated on the W side of Benefit Street bounded: E on Benefit Street 52'; S by Mawney's Land, land 104'; W by Zachariah Allen 50'; N by Richard Salisbury 104'--Deed Book 34, page 136, in Providence City Hall.

1809:--Josiah Humphrey lived here and until 1813.

1813:--The Estate of Josiah Humphrey is sold by his widow, Elizabeth to Thomas Holden--Deed Book 37, page 101, in Providence City Hall. The Holdens lived here until 1865--Providence Directory.

1823:--Fire record taken out by Charles Holden--House on Benefit Street--Brick and stone 39' front; 35' front to rear; 2 stories high in front and 3 in rear--

self occupied.....Mss fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Co. at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence R. I., Vol. 6, policy #1989.

1865:-Levi Holden et al sell this property to Mary Thomas wife of Hiram--Deed Book 171, page 329 in Providence City Hall.

1865:-Will of Henry J. Steere "to Horace W. Steere my Estate at 118 Benefit Street"--Wills Book 33, page 132, in Providence City Hall

1866:-Hiram H. and wife Mary Thomas lived here and until 1867--Providence Directory.

1867:-Hiram H. Thomas and wife sell this property to Jonah Steere--Deed Book 180, page 11, in Providence City Hall. The Steeres owned the property until 1919.

1892:-Horace Steere and wife Edith lived here and until 1920--Providence Directory.

1919:-Property is mortgaged by Horace Steere to Ethelbert A. Rusden--Deed Book 586, page 323, in Providence City Hall.

1923:-Daniel Eliot lived here--Providence Directory.

1922:-Ethelbert A. Rusden sell the property for \$8000 to Ronald McAdam and wife Maria bounded: E by Benefit 51.5; N by Max Latt 64.5; W by R. Steere 50.25; S by R. Steere 65'--Deed Book 623, page 2, in Providence City Hall.

1923:-McAdams lived here and until 1954--Providence Directory.

1956:-Katharine A. MacAdam and Vera M. Neville sell the above property to Donald Shepard for \$11,000--Deed Book 1058, page 341, in Providence City Hall.

1960:-Property is sold by Donald Shepard to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Davison--Deed Book 1104, page 1147, in Providence City Hall.

2. Date of erection: 1809.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The main entrance, the bay window and the roof balustrade are apparently later additions, perhaps of about 1900. Various alter-

ations have apparently been done to the interior several times. The house was restored by Donald Shepard who owned it from 1956 to 1960, and it is being renovated by the present owners.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
August 1961.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This an example of the less common brick houses on College Hill, and the earliest one standing on this part of Benefit Street. It has interesting detail and ornament.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The house has a brick main block facing east, five bays wide (about 36'), 2-1/2 stories high, on a hillside with the cellar at ground level at the west rear, and a two-story wooden rear wing.
2. Foundations: Cut brownstone in front, random field-stone on sides and rear.
3. Wall construction: Red brick, lime mortar, common bond, 2" x 7" brick, thin mortar joints.
4. Porches: Two-story entrance frontispiece with marble step. Second story bay window, and roof balustrade, not original, added perhaps about 1900. One-story wooden porch on south end of house leading to side entrance, lattice work supports, date unknown.
5. Chimneys: Brick: two on north side in end wall, one on south side in end wall, one in rear wing.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is on the east; side entrance on south; cellar entrances on the west.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Front windows with cut stone lintels, side windows with gauged brick flat arches.

Movable slat shutters on front windows. Sash not original.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: Gable roof. Asphalt shingles.
- b. Cornice: Boxed cornice with cyma recta crown mold, and bed mold with hollow cylindrical dentils.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan, two rooms deep, somewhat altered with the two parlors on the north side joined by a wide archway. Secondary stair hall at the south entrance; kitchen in rear wing.
2. Stairways: Main stairway in the central-entrance hall: open well, open string, L-shaped with short leg and winders at the top; ornamental step ends; Simple-molded rail, turned newels, slender square balusters. Secondary stair in side hall: closed string, straight run with winders at the bottom.
3. Flooring: Later hardwood flooring throughout except central hall and dining room beyond the entrance hall which have black and white asphalt tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doors: Interior doors apparently not original, plain door frames with simple molded trim.
6. Trim: Wood cornices and chair rails in several rooms. Elaborate Adam style plaster ceilings in main rooms on both first and second floor, plaster cornice on first floor.
7. Hardware: No original hardware observed.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Modern system with radiators plus four fireplaces on first floor, three on second. Two Adam style mantels in north parlor, later round-headed marble mantel in the south parlor(study).

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Faces east on the sidewalk in a residential area with a small rear yard.
2. Enclosures: Wood fence around back garden.
3. Walks: Concrete in front, flagstones to the side door.
4. Landscaping: Informal back garden.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
and Antoinette F. Downing
for the Providence Preservation
Society
August 1961.